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The Crisis Facing A Lethargic Land

By Sen. J. W. Fulbright

(Excerpted from a recent Senate address by the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.)

WHERE do we stand? We stand today a Nation with prodigious resources, able to afford private luxuries incomparable in history, but trailing the Soviet Union in science, space, armament, and most recently the Winter Olympics. Rich in the private sector of our economy, we are poor in the public sector, and we will get poorer if we follow the admonition of our Secretary of Commerce, who branded any politician as "irresponsible" or an "economic illiterate" if he were to try to "drain from the blood stream of the private economy the savings urgently needed . . . for growth."

Look but at the growth we get. Television repairmen being paid more than teachers; 200,000 fewer scientists and engineers than the Soviet Union with half as many college graduates; toilet water at every drugstore, and polluted streams in every state.

Without national leadership we are not able to put our enormous productive capabilities to the needs of the Nation. It's every man for himself, and the Nation take what's left.

OF COURSE, if we think Khrushchev was only kidding when he said he would bury us, we have no need to worry. But I, for one, believe our security is at stake. And yet, we stand as a Nation, a 20th century Babylon, headless and heartless, a big, fat target for the abylet Communist world and the clamoring, poverty-ridden new states.

Even if we don't know where we stand in the world—even if we would rather not know—it is a fact that we cannot hide our image from the world and this image is as important as any "foreign policy" we might devise.

The challenge to us arises partly from the arrival on the world scene of the Soviet Union. But the challenge also arises from what we have let ourselves become. There is one indispensable condition precedent to meeting the deadly challenge of our times. The American people ought to be told the bleak truth about their world, the character of the forces arrayed against them, and what they must do, at whatever cost, to survive or even to bring about a state of high security.

They must be told that however humane their society, whatever its ideals, this alone will not save them from destruction by a society armed with the prodigious mechanisms of our times and an implacable determination to dominate all men.

They must be told, furthermore, that the problems they face are incapable of solution within their time or the time of their children; that for decades to come the life of humanity will be threatened by the lava flow emerging from the greatest eruption of all time.

They must be reminded of what history and experience demonstrate; that merely because something is desirable does not mean that it will necessarily come to pass; that things men have longed for during centuries are as far from being realized now as they were in the days of Babylon.

THE PEOPLE must be told, too, that it will not be enough simply to react to the Soviet threat and to clean our domestic Augean stables. Goals we must have to which we and mankind may aspire. And once the goals are clarified we must have the fortitude and the patience and the means to attain them.

It is the duty of the President of the United States to inform the people. It is also his high privilege—if he avails himself of it—to call the people, so to speak, up to the hill of the Lord and tell them what will be exacted of them if they seek salvation on this earth against extinction or slavery.

I believe that the people would respond, that their latent greatness so long submerged would again manifest itself; that they would be found equal to the task.

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